

DECISION RECORD

for

Snag Creation and Stream Habitat Improvement within the Revised Middle Cow LSR Landscape Planning Project

Environmental Assessment Number OR118-05-022

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Medford District
Glendale Resource Area
Douglas County, Oregon

I. INTRODUCTION

The Middle Cow LSR Project is a landscape scale project that includes several forest management treatments designed to meet multiple federal directives such as the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP), the Northwest Forest Plan, and the National Fire Plan. This decision is applicable only to the snag creation and stream habitat improvement treatments associated with the Middle Cow LSR project. Decisions regarding stewardship projects will be issued separately. The final decision document for timber sales was issued in August 2006.

II. DECISION

I have decided to implement the proposed snag creation and stream habitat improvements as described in Alternative 2 of the Revised Middle Cow LSR Landscape Planning Project Environmental Assessment (revised EA) including the Project Design Features (PDFs). This decision includes (1) adding boulders and logs (less than 20 inches diameter at breast height) into Tennessee Gulch to create pools and slow the stream current for fish habitat and (2) creating snags and hollow trees after harvesting activities are completed within the Planning Area where snags and coarse woody debris are lacking (less than the recommended amount the LSR Assessment) in upland and riparian areas.

Snags will be created by treating up to 75 live trees greater than 24 inches diameter at breast height (dbh) and require a diameter least 16 inches at the height of the potential cavity. Snag creation will provide habitat for cavity nesters such as the pileated woodpecker, spotted and other owls, raptors, woodpeckers, flying squirrels, red tree voles, bats and other small mammals. Selected trees will be treated by two methods. In the first method, trees in 25 groups of three with all three trees located within one micro-site (50 ft of each other) to facilitate comparison among the results. Within each cluster, one snag will be created using each of three methods: girdling just below all the live limbs to produce a snag, girdling just above the lowest live whorl of limbs to produce a large horizontal structure within the crown, and inoculating the tree with heart rot fungus, collected within the same sub-watershed. The second method will be by a non-clustered/scattered treatment consisting of double girdling, at least 12 feet above ground, of a single tree at each site.

III. DECISION RATIONALE

A. Plan Conformance

This decision is in conformance with the following plans:

- *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (Northwest Forest Plan FSEIS, 1994 and ROD, 1994)
- *Final-Medford District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision* (EIS, 1994 and RMP/ROD, 1995)
- *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement: Management of Port-Orford-Cedar in Southwest Oregon* (FSEIS, 2004 and ROD, 2004)
- *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendment to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (FSEIS, 2000 and ROD, 2001) including any amendments or modifications in effect as of March 21, 2004
- *Medford District Integrated Weed Management Plan Environmental Assessment (1998)* and tiered to the *Northwest Area Noxious Weed Control Program* (EIS, 1985)

The Glendale Resource Area is aware of the August 1, 2005, U.S. District Court order in Northwest Ecosystem Alliance et al. v. Rey et al. which found portions of the *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to Remove or Modify the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines* (January, 2004) (EIS) inadequate. The Glendale Resource Area is also aware of the January 9, 2006, court order to:

- set aside the 2004 Record of Decision *To Remove or Modify the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines in Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern spotted Owl* (March, 2004) (2004 ROD) and
- reinstate the 2001 *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines* (January, 2001) (2001 ROD), including any amendments or modifications in effect as of March 21, 2004.

The order further directs: "Defendants shall not authorize, allow, or permit to continue any logging or other ground-disturbing activities...unless such activities are in compliance with the provisions of the 2001 ROD (as amended or modified as of March 21, 2004)."

The litigation over the amendment that eliminated the Survey & Manage mitigation measure from the Northwest Forest Plan does not affect the Middle Cow LSR Project. This is because all

required biological surveys for Survey & Manage species were completed before the completion of the Middle Cow LSR Project EA and meets the 2001 protocol (2001 ROD as amended or modified as of March 21, 2004). Therefore, this project complies with the Northwest Forest Plan prior to that amendment.

The snag creation activities and stream habitat improvement activities within the Revised Middle Cow LSR Landscape Planning Project would be consistent with the nine objectives of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy of the Northwest Forest Plan Record of Decision (1994). The Middle Cow Watershed Analysis (1999) recommended creating snags where they are lacking for wildlife habitat and adding large woody debris and boulders to streams to create pools and slow stream current for fish and other aquatic species.

This action will not result in measurable adverse effects to water quality. There will be no measurable change to stream shade, water nutrient levels, flow regime, or chemical contamination of streams, or springs as a result of this action. Because the work could result in some areas of exposed soil, the restoration projects could result in some sediment reaching fish habitat in Tennessee Gulch. This sediment will be expected to be seen in fish habitat during the first winter, as described in p.83 of the EA. "Because of the Project Design Features (PDF) which include the Best Management Practices (BMP) within the RMP, the amount of sediment reaching fish habitat from these activities would be minimal. The amount entering fish habitat would not cause turbidity to the point of substantially disrupting fish behavior. The amount of sediment would not cause a reduction in macroinvertebrates. Sediment input would not cause a detectable change in fish habitat. For example changes in embeddedness, interstitial spaces, and pool depth would not be measurable. Following the first winter and thereafter sediment entering fish habitat would decrease to the point of being immeasurable...The restoration project would have a long-term positive effect of improving fish habitat in approximately ¾ mile of stream by adding structure which would create pools and enhance spawning and rearing habitat," (EA p.100).

B. Alternatives Considered

The alternatives considered included the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1), which serves as the baseline to compare effects, and the Proposed Action (Alternative 2), which initiated the environmental analysis process. A description of these alternatives can be found in Chapter 2 of the revised EA. Alternative 1 was not selected because this alternative would not meet the purpose and need of the project as described in Chapter 1 of the revised EA.

C. Public Involvement

Planning of the Middle Cow LSR Project involved the public by mailing invitations to approximately 1,281 residents of the towns of Glendale and Azalea to attend a public scoping meeting provided on April 28, 2005 at the Azalea Grange Hall. About 30 local residents attended. A subsequent scoping report was mailed to those attending the meeting and to individuals and organizations that have expressed interest in Glendale Resource Area projects. The BLM received 11 public responses from either letters or emails during the scoping public comment period from April 14, 2005 to June 30, 2006. The Glendale Resource Area also accepted public comments to the Middle Cow LSR Project through the quarterly BLM Medford

Messenger publication beginning in the fall of 2004. The BLM considered these comments in the development of the alternatives analyzed in Appendix 1 of the EA and fully responded to these comments in Appendix 3 of the EA.

The Middle Cow LSR Landscape Planning Project EA, including a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), was made available for public comment from July 5 to August 4, 2006. The BLM received two comment letters or emails to the Middle Cow LSR Landscape Planning Project EA. The public comments to these documents were considered in reaching a decision for all of the proposed activities in this Project Area. No specific comments were received on the proposed snag creation or stream habitat improvement activities.

IV. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFIANT IMPACT

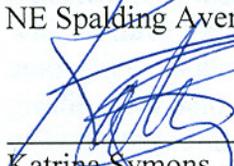
The two letters received during the 30 day public comment period for the EA and FONSI requested additional information but did not identify a flaw in assumptions, analysis, or data that would alter the environmental analysis disclosed in the EA or conclusions documented in the FONSI. It is my determination that Alternative 2 will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition for significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR § 1508.27. Therefore an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

V. ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

This decision is a forest management decision. Administrative remedies are available to persons who believe they will be adversely affected by this decision. Administrative recourse is available in accordance with BLM regulations and must follow the procedures and requirements described in 43 CFR § 5003.

To protest a forest management decision, a person must submit a written and signed protest to Glendale Field Manager 2164 NE Spalding Avenue, Grants Pass, OR 97526 by the close of business (4:30 p.m.) not more than 15 days after publication of the Notice of Decision in the *Grants Pass Daily Courier* newspaper. The protest must clearly and concisely state which portion or element of the decision is being protested and why it is believed to be in error, as well as cite applicable regulations. Faxed or emailed protests will not be considered. If no protest is received by the close of business (4:30 p.m.) within 15 days after publication of the Notice of Decision, the decision will become final. If a timely protest is received, the decision will be reconsidered in light of the statement of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information available, and a final decision will be issued in accordance with 43 CFR § 5003.3.

For additional information contact Michelle Calvert, Ecosystem Planner, (541-471-6505) at 2164 NE Spalding Avenue, Grants Pass, OR 97526.



Katrina Symons
Field Manager, Glendale Resource Area
Medford District, Bureau of Land Management



Date